

Rhetorical Question or Assertion? The Pragmatics of אֵלֶּה in Biblical Hebrew

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1. Introduction¹

It has been claimed that the form אֵלֶּה (also written אֵלֶּהָ or אֵלֶּהּ) is homonymous in Biblical Hebrew, representing, on the one hand, the combination of interrogative הָ and negative אֵלֶּ (“is it not?”), and, on the other hand, an indivisible particle that is neither interrogative nor negative.² The latter particle is generally held to be asseverative in nature and is believed to be similar in its use to הִנֵּה. In a previous article I presented syntactic evidence confirming the existence of this particle in Biblical Hebrew (henceforth BH).³ It was shown there that non-interrogative, non-negative אֵלֶּה belongs to the

1. I would like to thank the editors for their helpful comments on this paper.

2. See J. S. Croatto, “L’article hébreu et les particules emphatiques dans le sémitique de l’ouest,” *Ar.Or.* 39 (1971), 396–97; R. C. Steiner, Review of *An Adverbial Construction in Hebrew and Arabic: Sentence Adverbials in Frontal Position Separated from the Rest of the Sentence* by J. Blau, *Afroasiatic Linguistics* 6 (1979), 149; M. L. Brown, “‘Is it Not?’ or ‘Indeed!’: HL in Northwest Semitic,” *Maarav* 4 (1987), 201–19; J. Blau, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden, 1993), 105–6; D. Sivan and W. Schniedewind, “Letting Your ‘Yes’ Be ‘No’ in Ancient Israel: A Study of the Asseverative אֵלֶּ and אֵלֶּהָ,” *JSS* 38 (1993), 209–26; A. Moshavi, “Syntactic Evidence for a Clausal Adverb אֵלֶּה in Biblical Hebrew,” *JNSL* 33 (2007), 51–63. A somewhat different position is adopted by a number of scholars who recognize a non-interrogative אֵלֶּה but apparently view this as an idiomatic use of the interrogative-negative combination, rather than as a distinct particle; these include *BDB*, 520; H. A. Brongers, “Some Remarks on the Biblical Particle *halō*,” *OTS* 21 (1981), 180–85; P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, rev. English ed. (Rome, 2006), 574–75; M. Z. Kaddari, *A Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew (Alef–Taw)* (Ramat Gan, 2006), 544 [Hebrew]. Gordis expresses a view which is to be classified as belonging to the first school of thought or somewhere between the first and the second; see “A Rhetorical Use of Interrogative Sentences in Biblical Hebrew,” *AJSL* 49 (1933), 214; idem, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies* (New York, 1978), 47. Driver states that asseverative אֵלֶּה derives its affirmative force from an idiomatic use of the negative particle (G. R. Driver, “Affirmation by Exclamatory Negation,” *JANES* 5 [1973], 108–9). According to Sivan and Schniedewind (“Letting Your ‘Yes’ Be ‘No’”), Biblical Hebrew contains an asseverative אֵלֶּ and an asseverative אֵלֶּהָ, both unrelated etymologically.

3. Moshavi, “Syntactic Evidence.” As discussed briefly there (n. 5), scholars are divided as to whether the clausal adverb אֵלֶּה is historically related to the interrogative and negative particles, or has an unrelated etymological origin. The interested reader is referred to Brown, “‘Is it Not?’” and Sivan and Schniedewind, “Letting Your ‘Yes’ Be ‘No’” for the details of the argument. From a synchronic point of view, the etymological debate is irrelevant since the end result, a non-interrogative adverb, is the same according to both hypotheses.

syntactic class of clausal adverbs, a class that includes adverbs such as הַנְּה “behold,” לְכֵן “therefore,” and וְאִלְמָּו “whereas.”⁴

A major obstacle in investigating the function of the clausal adverb אֲלֵהּ lies in distinguishing between the two homonymous forms. Although interrogative and non-interrogative אֲלֵהּ are disambiguated in certain syntactic environments, as discussed in section 2, the two are often syntactically indistinguishable. In the present article it is shown that pragmatic evidence regarding discourse context can often be used to successfully identify the clausal adverb when syntactic evidence is unavailable. A tentative pragmatic characterization of the clausal adverb is then presented based on its use in these contexts.

2. Syntactic Environments that Disambiguate Interrogative and Non-interrogative אֲלֵהּ

As shown in an earlier article, a number of syntactic constructions disambiguate the interrogative-negative combination and the clausal adverb אֲלֵהּ in the classical BH prose corpus (Genesis–2 Kings).⁵ One construction is the preposed finite non-subordinate clause, i.e., the clause in which a subject, object or adjunct precedes the verb. The clausal adverb אֲלֵהּ precedes the preposed constituent, as in (1), whereas the negative particle ordinarily follows the preposed constituent, even when the clause contains an interrogative ה, as in (2).

(1) Judg. 4:14

אֲלֵהּ the LORD is going out before you.⁶

הָלֵא אֲלֵהּ לְפָנֶיךָ

(2) Gen. 18:25

Will the ruler of the world not do justice?⁷

הַשֹּׁפֵט כָּל-הָאָרֶץ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט:

Finite clauses with initial conditional clauses disambiguate the two forms as well. The clausal adverb אֲלֵהּ precedes a conditional clause:

4. On clausal adverbs in Biblical Hebrew, see A. Moshavi, *Word Order in the Biblical Hebrew Finite Clause: A Syntactic and Pragmatic Analysis of Preposing* (Winona Lake, IN, 2010), 68–75.

5. The conclusions presented in Moshavi, “Syntactic Evidence” are summarized here. In cases where insufficient data from within the classical BH prose corpus is available, examples are given from books outside the classical BH prose corpus.

6. Translations are my own, based on the NJPS and NRSV. Additional examples from the classical prose corpus are Gen. 20:5, 29:25, 31:15; Deut. 31:17; Josh. 22:20; Judg. 6:13, 11:7; 1 Kgs. 1:13. There are many additional occurrences of this construction in the larger biblical corpus. There is a hypothetical possibility that some of these are interrogative clauses in which the negative precedes a focused preposed element (for Judg. 14:14, the closest English equivalent would be “Is it not the Lord [as opposed to someone else] who is going out before you?”). Strict pragmatic constraints on the “focus of negation” construction, however, preclude its relevance for most אֲלֵהּ clauses with preposed constituents, including Judg. 14:14. For further discussion, see Moshavi, *Word Order*, 136–40; Moshavi, “Syntactic Evidence,” 11, n. 9.

7. Additional examples from the classical prose corpus are Gen. 18:25 and 2 Sam. 19:21. Examples from elsewhere in the Bible are Jer. 18:6; Ezek. 18:25 (הֲדַרְכֵי לִי אֵל תִּבְנֶן) “Is My way unfair?”; Job 11:2.

(3) 1 Sam. 15:17

הָלוֹא אִם־קָטָן אַתָּה בְּעֵינֶיךָ רֹאשׁ שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אַתָּה
 הָלוֹא even if you are small in your eyes, you are the head of the tribes of Israel.⁸

The negative particle (when part of the apodosis) and interrogative הָ, in contrast, both follow a conditional clause, as in (4) and (5).

(4) Gen. 43:5

וְאִם־אֵינְךָ מְשַׁלַּח לֹא נֵרְד
 And if you do not let [him] go, we will not go down.⁹

(5) Hag. 2:13

אִם־יִגַּע טְמֵא־נֶפֶשׁ בְּכָל־אֶלֶף הַיְטֵמָה
 If someone defiled by a corpse touches any of these, will it be defiled?¹⁰

The clausal adverb and the negative particle are also disambiguated in finite clauses involving left-dislocation (*casus pendens*). The clausal adverb הָלוֹא precedes a left-dislocated element (6), whereas the negative particle follows (7):¹¹

(6) Judg. 11:24

הֲלֹא אֵת אֲשֶׁר יוֹרִישֶׁךָ כְּמוֹשׁ אֶלֶהֶיךָ אוֹתוֹ תִירָשׁ
 הָלוֹא what Chemosh your God gives you, that is what you possess.¹²

(7) Gen. 2:17

וּמִעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ
 And the tree of knowledge of good and evil, do not eat from it.

Finally, when הָלוֹא occurs in front of a constituent connected to the rest of the clause by a conjunction, it is clearly a clausal adverb:

8. An additional example is Gen. 4:7, although the syntactic structure of the double conditional there is open to a number of interpretations.

9. Numerous additional examples of this construction can be cited, including, e.g., Exod. 21:10, 22:13, 40:37; Deut. 24:12.

10. The combination of the negative and interrogative following a syntactically unmarked conditional clause is found in Num. 12:14 (וְאִם־בִּיחַ יִרְקַע בְּפִי הָאֵל תִּכְלַם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים) “And (= if) her father had spit in her face, would she not bear her shame for seven days?” and 2 Kgs. 5:13 (דָּבָר גָּדוֹל הִנְבִּיא דָּבָר אֱלֹהִים הָלוֹא תַעֲשֶׂה) “[If] the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it”). For further discussion of the former verse, see section 3.6 below. Examples of הָלוֹא following a conditional clause elsewhere in the Bible are Jer. 38:15 (after a conditional clause with כִּי); Obad. 1:5; Ps. 44:21–22; Qoh. 6:6 (after a conditional clause with וְאִלּוּ). The conditional clause may of course be negative as well, e.g., Gen. 44:23.

11. Interrogative הָ would presumably follow a left-dislocated constituent as well, although I am not aware of left-dislocated finite clauses containing the interrogative particle (aside from those with הָלוֹא). The position of the clausal adverb in verbless clauses featuring left-dislocation is different from its position in finite left-dislocated clauses. In the former, the clausal adverb הָלוֹא follows the left-dislocated element, e.g., וְהַיְהוּדָה “And the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, הָלוֹא they are written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah” (1 Kgs. 14:29). On this formula see further section 3.5 below.

12. Additional examples are Exod. 4:14 and Num. 23:12. Examples from outside the classical prose corpus are Jer. 44:21 and Ezek. 24:25–26.

(8) 1 Sam. 6:6

הָלוֹא כַּאֲשֶׁר הִתְעַלְל בָּהֶם וַיִּשְׁלְחוּם וַיֵּלְכוּ:
 הָלוֹא when He made a mockery of them, they let them go, and they departed.¹³

Although the interrogative combination and the clausal adverb are syntactically distinguished in the constructions described above, the two occur in the same syntactic position in other constructions, including the verb-first finite clause and many types of non-verbal and participial clauses.

3. *Discourse Contexts Indicative of the Clausal Adverb*

Although the interrogative-negative combination and the clausal adverb הָלוֹא have distinct meanings, it is actually quite difficult to distinguish the two on pragmatic grounds, due to the frequent use of interrogative הָלוֹא in rhetorical questions. A rhetorical question is a question that serves as a pragmatic assertion, implying its own answer.¹⁴ In contrast to the genuine question, a rhetorical question is not a request for information, and usually does not expect an answer. The polarity of the implied answer to a yes-no rhetorical question is the reverse of the polarity of the question, as illustrated by (9):¹⁵

(9) Job 11:2

הַרְבֵּ דְבָרִים לֹא יֵעֲנֶה וְאִם־אִישׁ שִׁפְתָּיִם יִצְדֵּק:
 Is a multitude of words unanswerable? Must a loquacious person be right?

The verse contains a pair of rhetorical questions, the first negative, with a positive implied answer (“A multitude of words can be answered”) and the second positive, with a negative implied answer (“A loquacious person is not [necessarily] right”).¹⁶

Since negative rhetorical questions imply positive answers, it is generally not clear when הָלוֹא is the clausal adverb marking an explicit assertion, as opposed to the interrogative-negative combination marking a rhetorical question implying the same assertion. A typical example is (10):

(10) Gen. 42:22

וַיַּעַן רְאוּבֵן אֹתָם לֵאמֹר הָלוֹא אָמַרְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם | לֹא־אֶמְרָה בְּיַדְךָ וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם
 And Reuben answered them, saying, “Did I not tell you, ‘Do no wrong to the boy,’/הָלוֹא I told you, ‘Do no wrong to the boy,’ and you did not listen!”

13. Additional examples are Isa. 29:17 and Obad. 1:8.

14. J. Schmidt-Radefeldt, “On So-called ‘Rhetorical’ Questions,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 1 (1977), 375–92; C. Ilie, *What Else Can I Tell You? A Pragmatic Study of English Rhetorical Questions as Discursive and Argumentative Acts* (Stockholm, 1994), 38, 45.

15. On the operation of this rule in other languages, see E. N. Pope, “Questions and Answers in English” (Ph.D. diss., MIT, 1972), 46–47; J. M. Sadock, “Queclaratives,” in *Papers from the Seventh Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society* (Chicago, 1971), 223–32; P. Siemund, “Interrogative Constructions,” in M. Haspelmath et al., eds., *Language Typology and Language Universals: An International Handbook*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 2001), 1026. On the validity of the reversed-polarity rule for BH, see A. Moshavi, “Can a Positive Rhetorical Question Have a Positive Answer in the Bible,” *JSS* (2011), 253–73.

16. The הָלוֹא . . . הָ sequence often occurs in pairs of parallel, synonymous questions (Joüon-Muraoka, *Grammar*, 575), e.g., הָמֶלֶךְ תִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ אִם־מִשׁוֹל תִּמְשָׁל בָּנוּ “Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to rule over us?” (Gen. 37:8).

Reuben's statement can be understood as a rhetorical question, "Did I not tell you, 'Do no wrong?'" Alternatively, it can be read as an assertion with the clausal adverb: "אֵלֶּיךָ I told you, 'Do no wrong.'" Taken either way, the message is the same: "I told you not to harm him!"

Although demonstrating that אֵלֶּיךָ is the interrogative-negative combination is often impossible, I argue here that there are a number of discourse contexts in which interpretation as the clausal adverb is the only plausible alternative; i.e., when אֵלֶּיךָ occurs in a context in which a rhetorical question would be atypical in BH and other languages, it can be assumed that the clausal adverb is involved. Speakers use rhetorical questions when they consider the implied assertion of the question to be obvious.¹⁷ The rhetorical question is often used as a persuasive device: the speaker attempts to convince the addressee to accept the implied answer to the question by suggesting that the answer is obvious to everyone except the addressee.¹⁸ In classical BH prose contexts that do not involve obvious information, nor are persuasive in nature, אֵלֶּיךָ is best understood as the clausal adverb.

A less conclusive indicator of the clausal adverb, but one that can be cited as subsidiary support, is the interchangeability of אֵלֶּיךָ and הִנֵּה in a given discourse context. Since הִנֵּה does not appear in questions, genuine or rhetorical, interchangeability with אֵלֶּיךָ supports interpretation of אֵלֶּיךָ as non-interrogative.¹⁹

In some cases, a context that has been established as non-interrogative on pragmatic grounds also happens to exhibit instances of אֵלֶּיךָ that are syntactically identifiable as clausal adverbs. In such cases the syntactic evidence provides independent corroboration of the pragmatic analysis.

3.1 Announcements

In announcements, אֵלֶּיךָ is best taken as non-interrogative:²⁰

17. R. Quirk et al., *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (London, 1985), 1478; J. M. Sadock and A. M. Zwicky, "Speech Act Distinctions in Syntax," in T. Shopen, ed., *Language Typology and Syntactic Description* (Cambridge, 1985), 1.180; H. Rohde, "Rhetorical Questions as Redundant Interrogatives," *San Diego Linguistics Papers* 2 (2006), 134–68. For biblical examples see, e.g., Gen. 4:9, 30:2, 50:19; Num. 11:22.

18. On the use of rhetorical questions in persuasive contexts, see G. Anzilotti, "The Rhetorical Question as an Indirect Speech Device in English and Italian," *Canadian Modern Language Review* 38 (1982), 290–302; C. Ene, "Rhetorical Questions within the Theory of Speech Acts," *Cahiers de linguistique théorique et appliquée* 20 (1983), 36; J. Frank, "You Call That a Rhetorical Question? Forms and Functions of Rhetorical Questions in Conversation," *Journal of Pragmatics* 14 (1990), 726; Ilie, *What Else Can I Tell You*, 134–215. On the persuasive use of rhetorical questions in Biblical Hebrew, see C. J. Labuschagne, *The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament* (1966, Leiden), 23; L. J. de Regt, "Discourse Implications of Rhetorical Questions in Job, Deuteronomy and the Minor Prophets," in L. J. de Regt, J. de Waard, and J. P. Fokkelman, eds., *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* (Assen, 1996), 52. For biblical examples see, e.g., Gen. 37:8, 10; Num. 22:38; 2 Kgs. 7:2.

19. Scholars making this argument include Croatto, "L'article hébreu," 396–97; Steiner, *Review*, 149; Brongers, "Some Remarks," 180–81; Sivan and Schniedewind, "Letting Your 'Yes' Be 'No'," 213–14.

20. See also Croatto ("L'article hébreu," 396) on 1 Sam. 10:1.

(11) Judg. 4:6

ותשלח ותקרא לברק בן־אבינעם מקדש נפתלי ותאמר אליו הלא צנה | אלהי־ישראל לך ומשכתך בהר
 תבור ולקחת עמך עשרת אלפים איש מבני נפתלי ומבני זבלון:

And she sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam, of Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him,
 “אלהי הַלֵּא the Lord, the God of Israel has commanded: Go and march up to Mount Tabor, and take
 with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun.”

(12) 1 Sam. 20:37

ויקרא יהונתן אחרי הנער ויאמר הלווא החצי ממך והלאה:

And Jonathan called after the boy and said, “אלהי הַלֵּא the arrow is beyond you.”

(13) 1 Sam. 23:19

ויעלו זפים אל־שאול הגבעתה לאמר הלווא יוד מסתתר עמנו במצודות בחרשה בגבעת החכילה אשר מימין
 הישימון:

And some Ziphites went up to Saul in Gibeah and said, “אלהי הַלֵּא David is hiding among us in the
 strongholds of Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is south of Jeshimon.”²¹

It is implausible that an announcement would be phrased as a rhetorical question. Announcements typically present information not previously known to the speaker, and not obvious in any sense. The non-interrogative interpretation of הַלֵּא in announcements is supported by the interchange of הַלֵּא with הִנֵּה in this discourse context. For example, in the passage containing Jonathan’s report of what he planned to say to the boy, parallel to the utterance in (12), הַלֵּא is replaced by הִנֵּה:

(14) 1 Sam. 20:22

ואם־כה אמר ללעלם הנה החצים ממך והלאה

And if I say to the lad, “Behold the arrows are beyond you”²²

3.2 Internal Realization

When הַלֵּא marks a realization of the speaker it should be understood as non-interrogative. In this admittedly rare context the utterance with הַלֵּא expresses an internal thought:

(15) Deut. 31:17

ואמר ביום ההוא הלא על כִּי־אין אלהי בקרבי מצאוני הרעות האלה:

And they shall say on that day, “אלהי הַלֵּא it is because my God is not in my midst that these evils
 have befallen me.”

(16) Isa. 44:20

ולא יאמר הלווא שקר בימיני:

And he doesn’t say, “אלהי הַלֵּא the thing in my right hand is a fraud!”

Since it contains new information, the הַלֵּא clause can hardly be regarded as a rhetorical question.

21. See also the similar 1 Sam. 26:1.

22. Additional examples of announcements with הִנֵּה include, e.g., Gen. 48:2; Judg. 13:10; 1 Sam. 13:33, 23:1, 25:14; 2 Sam. 4:10, 18:10, 19:8; 1 Kgs. 2:39.

3.3 Predictions

Like announcements and internal speech, predictions typically involve new, non-obvious information. Examples of הָלֵא in prophetic predictions are shown in (17) and (18).²³ The non-interrogative interpretation is corroborated in both examples by syntactic evidence, although the citations are admittedly from outside the classical BH corpus: in both verses הָלֵא precedes a preposed constituent or constituents.²⁴

(17) Ezek. 38:14

כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא בְּשֵׁבֶת עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבֶטֶח תִּדְעוּ:

Thus says the Lord GOD: “הָלֵא on that day when my people Israel are living securely, you will take note.”

(18) Ezek. 26:15

כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה לְצֹר הָלֵא | מִקּוֹל מִפְּלִתָד בְּאֶזְק הַלָּל בְּהַרְג הַרְג בְּתוֹכְךָ יִרְעֵשׂוּ הָאִיִּים:

Thus says the Lord GOD to Tyre: “הָלֵא the coastlands shall quake at the sound of your fall, when the wounded groan, when slaughter goes on within you.”

Predictions exhibit a general parallel between הָלֵא and הִנֵּה, although predictions with הִנֵּה generally concern the immediate future and contain a participle rather than a finite verb; among numerous examples are Gen. 6:13, 17; 9:9.

3.4 Answers

When הָלֵא occurs in the answer to a question or an inquiry, as in (19) and (20), it appears to be non-interrogative:²⁵

(19) 1 Sam. 29:3

וַיֹּאמְרוּ שָׂרֵי פְּלִשְׁתִּים מֶה הָעִבְרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיֹּאמֶר אַכִּישׁ אֶל־שָׂרֵי פְּלִשְׁתִּים הַלְּזֹאֵה דָוִד עֶבֶד | שְׂאֻל מִלְּךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אִתִּי זֶה יָמִים אֲרֻנָּה שָׁנִים

The Philistine officers asked, “Who are those Hebrews?” And Achish answered the Philistine officers, “הָלֵא that is David, the servant of King Saul of Israel, who has been with me for a year or more.”

(20) 2 Sam. 11:3

וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד וַיִּדְרֹשׁ לְאִשָּׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הַלְּזֹאֵה בַת־שֶׁבַע בַּת־אֱלִיעֶזֶר אִשְׁתׁ אֲוִרְיָה הַחִתִּי:

And the king sent and inquired about the woman, and he said, “הָלֵא that is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam wife of Uriah the Hittite.”

In neither example is the answer to the question obvious to the addressee, nor is there any reason to think that it should be. Thus a rhetorical question would not appear to be an appropriate response to the questions preceding הָלֵא. It is true that the use of rhetorical questions as answers is known from other languages, as in the following:

23. Additional examples include Isa. 29:17; Ezek. 24:25, 38:14; Obad. 1:8.

24. In Isa. 29:17 and Obad. 1:8 הָלֵא precedes a constituent connected to its clause by a conjunction (see section 2 above).

25. See Steiner, Review, 149; Kaddari, *Dictionary*, 544.

- (21) A: Do you speak of the lady?
 B: Who else should I be talking of?²⁶

The antagonistic tone of B's answer is noteworthy. According to Schmidt-Radefeldt, a speaker who uses a rhetorical question to imply the answer to a question "does this to express a propositional attitude of irritation or even of anger about the fact of being asked a question which he for his part finds completely inappropriate."²⁷ Such a challenging tone would be inappropriate in the context of the biblical occurrences. In (19) Achish wants his officers to trust David, and would naturally adopt an appeasing tone, rather than a confrontational one. Similarly, it seems unlikely that the answer to a king's inquiry, as in (20), would be phrased in an antagonistic manner. It can be concluded that אֲלֵךְ in these examples is not interrogative and marks an assertion rather than a rhetorical question.

The non-interrogative interpretation of אֲלֵךְ is also probable when a speaker answers his own question:

- (22) Exod. 4:11
 וַיֹּאמֶר יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי מִי שֵׁם פֶּה לְאָדָם אִו מִי־שׁוֹם אֵלֶם אִו חֲרָשׁ אִו פִּקֵּחַ אִו עִוֵּר הֲלֵא אֲנֹכִי יְיָ
 And the Lord said to him, "Who gives man speech? Who makes him dumb or deaf, seeing or blind? אֲלֵךְ it is I, the Lord."²⁸

The אֲלֵךְ clause in (22) can theoretically be rendered as a rhetorical question, "Is it not I, the Lord?" In this and other similar examples, the answer expressed in the אֲלֵךְ clause is obvious, lending plausibility to a rhetorical interpretation. Nevertheless, comparison to other languages suggests that (22) is best understood as containing an assertive, rather than an interrogative answer. An example from English is shown below:²⁹

- (23) Who do I support for President? Why, Barack Obama, of course!

In a slightly different type of question-answer sequence, אֲלֵךְ occurs after an affirmative yes-no rhetorical question:

- (24) Jer. 7:19
 הֲאֵתִי הֵם מְכַעֲסִים נְאֻם־יְיָ הֲלוֹא אֲתֵם לְמַעַן בְּשַׁת פְּנֵיהֶם:
 "Is it Me they are vexing?" says the Lord. "אֲלֵךְ it is themselves, to their own disgrace."³⁰

In this and similar examples, the אֲלֵךְ clause does not answer the preceding rhetorical question, whose implied answer is simply אֵלֵךְ. Instead, the אֲלֵךְ clause presents the correct alternative to a value implicitly rejected by the question. Thus the אֲלֵךְ clause

26. Example from Schmidt-Radefeldt, "Rhetorical Questions," 389.

27. Ibid., 388–89; see also Ilie (*What Else Can I Tell You*, 51), who states that rhetorical questions functioning as answers are often argumentative.

28. Additional examples are Exod. 33:16; 1 Sam. 9:20, 29:4; 2 Sam. 11:21, 16:19; Isa. 42:24, 45:21; Mic. 1:5 (2x).

29. Adapted from Pope ("Questions," 45). A similar usage is known in French and German, as noted by Schmidt-Radefeldt ("Rhetorical Questions," 379). For a comparable interpretation of Biblical question-answer sequences, see Brongers ("Some Remarks," 185) on Mic. 1:5 שְׂמֵרֹן הֲלוֹא עֲמֹרָה, which he renders as "What is the crime of Jacob? Samaria, of course!"

30. Additional examples of this type are Num. 12:2; 2 Kgs. 18:27; Isa. 36:12, 58:5–6; Ezek. 18:23, 25, 29; 1 Chr. 19:3.

in (24) substitutes “themselves” for the implicitly rejected “Me.” Here too an interrogative interpretation, “Is it not themselves?” is theoretically possible, although the non-interrogative interpretation seems more probable, given the general similarity to the question-answer sequence illustrated in (22).

3.5 Third-person Narrative

In addition, הָלֵא appears repeatedly in a fixed formula in Kings in narrative texts related in the third person, as illustrated by (23):

(23) 1 Kgs. 11:41

וְיִתֵּר דְּבָרֵי שְׁלֹמֹה וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְחֻקְמֹתָיו הַלְּוֹא־הֵם כְּתוּבִים עַל־סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי שְׁלֹמֹה:
And the other events of Solomon’s reign, and all that he did, and his wisdom, הָלֵא they are recorded in the book of the Annals of Solomon.

In examples like (23), הָלֵא is clearly not interrogative, as rhetorical questions do not otherwise occur in third-person narrative (as distinguished from dialogue or second person monologue).³¹ The non-interrogative nature of הָלֵא in third-person narrative is confirmed by its interchangeability with הִנֵּה. For example, הֵלֵא הֵם is replaced by הִנֵּה הֵם (הִנֵּה plus an enclitic 3rd pers. pronoun) in a number of occurrences of the formula in Kings:³²

(24) 1 Kgs. 14:19

וְיִתֵּר דְּבָרֵי יְרֻבְעֵם אֲשֶׁר נָלַחַם וְאֲשֶׁר מָלַךְ הִנֵּה כְּתוּבִים עַל־סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
And the other events of Jeroboam’s reign, how he fought and how he ruled, behold they are recorded in the Annals of the Kings of Israel.³³

In the corresponding verses in Chronicles the formula regularly has הִנֵּה, although there are a few cases with הֵלֵא הֵם (2 Chr. 9:29; 12:15), and one occurrence with הִנֵּה הֵלֵא הֵם together (2 Chr. 25:26).³⁴

3.6 Justifications

The interpretation of הָלֵא in justificational clauses is less straightforward than the discourse contexts discussed above. By justification I mean a statement put forth in support of a second, often implicit assertion. Often הָלֵא justifies an assertion implied by a directive:

31. To speakers of Modern Hebrew, a language in which הָלֵא functions as a justificational adverb (“after all”), the non-interrogative nature of הָלֵא in such passages is obvious. In fact, a citation by this author of the traditional King James translation of this passage (“And the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, [are] they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?”) triggered unexpected laughter from the audience at a conference of Israeli linguists in 2004. On הָלֵא in Modern Hebrew, see M. Ariel, “Discourse Markers and Form-Function Correlations,” in A. H. Jucker and Y. Ziv, eds., *Discourse Markers: Descriptions and Theory* (Amsterdam: 1998), 234, 237, 249.

32. Additional examples are 2 Kgs. 15:11, 15, 26, 31. See also הִנֵּה עַל־סֵפֶר הַיָּשָׁר it is written in the Book of Jashar” (Josh. 10:13) vs. הִנֵּה כְּתוּבָה עַל־סֵפֶר הַיָּשָׁר “Behold it is written in the Book of Jashar” (2 Sam. 1:18).

33. On the position of the clausal adverb הָלֵא in verbless clauses like this one see n. 11 above. Notice that the clausal adverb הִנֵּה in (24) occupies the same position as הָלֵא in (23).

34. *BHS* notes that several mss., the Targum, and the parallel text in 2 Kgs. 14:18 read הֵלֵא הֵם.

(25) Gen. 13:9

הָלֹא כְּלֵי־הָאָרֶץ לְפָנֶיךָ הַפָּרָד נָא מֵעָלַי אִם־הֵשְׁמַאל וְאִי־מִנָּה וְאִם־הַיָּמִין וְאִשְׁמְאִילָהּ:

“הָלֹא the whole land is before you. Let us separate: if you go north, I will go south, and if you go south, I will go north.”

Here הָלֹא justifies an assertion implied by the directive, “You should separate from me.”³⁵ In the next example הָלֹא justifies a rhetorical question:

(26) 1 Sam. 9:21

וַיֵּעַן שָׂאוּל וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלוֹא בְדוֹמִינִי אָנֹכִי מִקָּטְנֵי שְׁבֹטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִשְׁפַּחְתִּי הַצְעֵרָה מִכָּל־מִשְׁפָּחוֹת שְׁבֹטֵי בְנֵי־מִן וְלָמָּה דִּבַּרְתָּ אֵלַי כַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה:

And Saul replied, “הָלֹא I am only a Benjaminite, from the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my clan is the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin. And (= so) why did you say such things to me?”

The justified assertion is “You should not have said such things to me,” implied by the rhetorical “why” question.³⁶

A number of scholars have argued that הָלֹא is non-interrogative when it is used for justification.³⁷ As noted by Steiner, there is a striking similarity between justificational הָלֹא and a parallel use of הִנֵּה.³⁸ In (27), below, הִנֵּה justifies a directive, and in (28) הִנֵּה justifies a rhetorical question.³⁹

(27) Gen. 20:15

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ הִנֵּה אֶרְצִי לְפָנֶיךָ בְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ שָׁב:

And Abimelech said, “Behold my land is before you; settle wherever you please.”

(28) Judg. 6:15

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בְּנִי אֲדֹנָי בְּמָה אוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל הִנֵּה אֶלְפִי הַדָּל בְּמִנְשָׁה וְאָנֹכִי הַצְעִיר בְּבֵית אָבִי:

He said to him, “Please my lord, how can I deliver Israel? Behold my clan is the humblest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father’s household.”

35. Additional examples of הָלֹא justifying a directive (a command, request or suggestion) include Gen. 13:9, 19:20, 37:13; Judg. 9:38, 15:2; 2 Sam. 13:28 (with כִּי); 1 Kgs. 1:11–12; Isa. 44:8, 51:9–10; Ruth 2:9, 3:2–3; 1 Chr. 21:17, 22:18–19. For further discussion of these and more complex textual structures involving justificational הָלֹא, see A. Moshavi, “הָלֹא as a Discourse Marker of Justification in Biblical Hebrew,” *Hebrew Studies* 48 (2007), 177–86, at 180–86.

36. Examples of הָלֹא justifying one or more rhetorical questions include Gen. 4:6–7, 29:25, 44:15, Exod. 14:11–12; Num. 22:37; Deut. 32:6; Judg. 11:7, 15:11; 1 Sam. 1:8, 6:6, 15:17–19, 26:15; 2 Sam. 2:26, 11:10, 20, 1 Kgs. 2:42–43; 2 Kgs. 4:28; Mal. 2:10. For further discussion see Moshavi, “הָלֹא,” 177–80.

37. Steiner, Review, 149; see also Kaddari, *Dictionary*, 544; Moshavi, “הָלֹא.” Fassberg points out a recurrent parallel between נָא . . . הָלֹא and נָא . . . הִנֵּה (נָא); see S. E. Fassberg, *Studies in Biblical Syntax* (Jerusalem, 1994), 46–47 [Hebrew].

38. Steiner, Review, 149. On justificational הִנֵּה see also, e.g., T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York, 1971), 170; C. J. Labuschagne, “The Particles הֵן and הִנֵּה,” *OTS* 18 (1973), 14; D. Slager, “The Use of *Behold* in the Old Testament,” *Occasional Papers in Translation and Text Linguistics* 3 (1989), 60–66; B. K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, 1990), 676–77; C. M. Follingstad, “Hinnēh and Focus Function: With Application to Tyap,” *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 7 (1995), 12–13.

39. Additional representative examples of הִנֵּה justifying a directive include Gen. 16:2, 6, 24:51, 38:23; Exod. 1:9–10; Num. 22:5–6, 11; Josh. 9:25; 1 Sam. 8:5, 18:17; 1 Sam. 28:21–22; 1 Kgs. 17:9, 22:13; examples of הִנֵּה justifying a rhetorical question include, e.g., Gen. 26:9; Num. 22:32–33; 1 Sam. 21:15, 24:9–10; 2 Sam. 18:11. For further details see Moshavi, “הָלֹא.”

Notice the similarity in content between (25) and (27), and between (26) and (28).

Syntactic evidence confirms that justificational הֲלֵא is often non-interrogative. When a justificational הֲלֵא clause contains a preposed element, הֲלֵא usually occurs in front of the preposed element, in the characteristic position of the clausal adverb. In the following examples, the הֲלֵא clauses justify the rhetorical questions that follow:

(29) Judg. 11:7

וַיֹּאמֶר יִפְתָּח לְזִקְנֵי גִלְעָד הֲלֵא אַתֶּם שְׂנֵאתֶם אוֹתִי וְתִגְרְשׁוּנִי מִבֵּית אָבִי וּמְדוּעַ בָּאתֶם אֵלַי עַתָּה כְּאִשְׁרָ צָר לְכֶם:

And Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, “הֲלֵא you hate me and drove me out of my father’s house. And (= so) why have you come to me now when you are in trouble?”

(30) 1 Kgs. 1:13

לֵכִי וּבֹאִי אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד וְאָמַרְתְּ אֵלָיו הֲלֵא־אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאֹמֶתְךָ לֵאמֹר כִּי־שְׁלֹמֹה בְנִךְ יִמְלֹךְ אַחֲרָי וְהוּא יֵשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּאִי וּמְדוּעַ מְלִךְ אֲדֹנָיְהוּ:

Go to King David and say to him, “הֲלֵא you, O lord king, swore to your maidservant, saying ‘Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit upon my throne.’ And (= so) why has Adonijah become king?”⁴⁰

Despite these points of evidence, it is likely that some justificational הֲלֵא clauses are actually rhetorical questions. The use of rhetorical questions to express a premise supporting the conclusion of an argument is a well-known phenomenon in other languages, e.g., “You should take an umbrella. Do you want to catch cold?”⁴¹ The conclusion, “You should take an umbrella,” is justified by a rhetorical question implying the assertion “You don’t want to catch cold.”

In Biblical Hebrew the justificational use of rhetorical questions is widespread. By expressing the premise as a rhetorical question, the speaker establishes common ground between speaker and addressee (“Clearly, we both agree on the obvious fact that . . .”) which is then used to advance the argument.⁴² An example of a positive yes-no question used for justification is:

40. Additional examples of justificational הֲלֵא that can be identified as the clausal adverb on syntactic grounds (see section 2 above) include Gen. 4:7, 20:5, 31:15; Josh. 22:20; Judg. 4:14, 11:24; 1 Sam. 6:6, 15:17; 1 Kgs. 1:13.

41. Adapted from F. H. van Eemeren and R. Grootendorst, *Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions: A Theoretical Model for the Analysis of Discussions Directed towards Solving Conflicts of Opinion* (Dordrecht, 1984), 97. See also F. H. van Eemeren et al., *Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory: A Handbook of Historical Backgrounds and Contemporary Developments* (Mahwah, NJ, 1996), 13–14. For a detailed discussion on the use of rhetorical questions in argumentation see Ilie, *What Else Can I Tell You*, 134–215.

42. See, e.g., W. Brueggemann, “Jeremiah’s Use of Rhetorical Questions,” *JBL* 92 (1973), 359–60; J. L. Crenshaw, “Impossible Questions, Sayings, and Tasks,” *Semeia* 17 (1980), 23; T. R. Hobbs, “Jeremiah 3:1–5 and Deuteronomy 24:1–4,” *ZAW* 86 (1974), 25–26; R. T. Hyman, “Questions and the Book of Ruth,” *Hebrew Studies* 24 (1983), 201; R. E. Johnson, “The Rhetorical Question as a Literary Device in Ecclesiastes” (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1986), 99; A. van Selms, “Motivated Interrogative Sentences in Biblical Hebrew,” *Semitics* 2 (1971–72), 143–49; idem, “Motivated Interrogative Sentences in the Book of Job,” *Semitics* 6 (1978), 28–35. For an analysis of some common argument types involving rhetorical questions, see A. Moshavi, “Two Types of Argumentation Involving Rhetorical Questions in Biblical Hebrew Dialogue,” *Bib.* 90 (2009), 32–46; E. Herzog, “The Triple Rhetorical Argument—An Expression of Syllogism in the Bible,” *Beit Mikra* 54 (2009), 62–82 [Hebrew].

(31) Gen. 18:13–14

למה זה צחקקה שררה לאמר האף אמנם אלד ואני זקנתתי: היפלא מי דבר

Why did Sarah laugh, and say, “Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?” Is anything too great for the LORD?

The conclusion of the argument is the assertion “Sarah should not have scoffed at the news that she could bear a child,” implied by a rhetorical “why” question, “Why did Sarah laugh?” The premise supporting this assertion, “Nothing is too great for the Lord,” is implied by the positive rhetorical question, “Is anything too great for the Lord?”⁴³

Yes-no rhetorical questions like the one in (31) show that some justificational הלא clauses may be negative rhetorical questions. In at least one case syntactic evidence shows that this is the correct interpretation:

(32) Num. 12:14

ואביה ירק ירק בפניה הלא תכלם שבעת ימים תסגר שבעת ימים מחוץ למחנה ואחר תאסף:

And (= if) her father had spit in her face, would she not bear her shame for seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp for seven days, and after that she may be brought in again.⁴⁴

The conditional sentence containing הלא serves as justification for the directives that follow. If הלא represented the clausal adverb, it would be expected to precede the protasis ירק אביה ירק בפניה תכלם שבעת ימים, yielding ירק אביה ירק בפניה הלא (compare 1 Sam. 15:17 הלאו אסקטן אתה בעיניך ראש שבטי ישראל אתה [3] above.) Since הלא actually follows the protasis, it appears that the conditional sentence is a negative rhetorical question, stressing the obviousness of the premise: “Would she not be shut out for seven days if her father had spat in her face?” This example casts doubt on the blanket assumption that clauses like those in Gen. 13:9 and 1 Sam. 9:21 (examples 25 and 26 above), in which the syntactic structure does not unequivocally point to either interpretation of הלא, are necessarily assertions with the clausal adverb rather than negative rhetorical questions.⁴⁵

4 The Core Pragmatic Function of the Clausal Adverb הלא

The varied nature of the discourse contexts in which the clausal adverb הלא appears makes it difficult to determine its core pragmatic function. I do not attempt here to offer

43. Additional representative examples include Gen. 4:9, 50:19 (following causal כפי); Exod. 14:11; Josh. 22:16–17; 2 Sam. 12:23; 2 Kgs. 5:7, 18:32–33, 19:11–12; Ruth 1:11. A notable phenomenon in poetry is the three-part structure featuring a doubled yes-no question which justifies a preceding or following rhetorical question, e.g., הלאו אסקטן אתה בעיניך ראש שבטי ישראל אתה “Is Israel a bondman? Is he a home-born slave? Why has he been given over to plunder?” (Jer. 2:14; additional examples include, e.g., 2 Sam. 19:36, 43; Num. 11:11–12; Isa. 50:2; Jer. 2:31, 14:19, 22:28, 49:1; Mic. 4:9). For discussion see A. D. Singer, Review of “The Legend of King Keret: A Canaanite Epic of the Bronze Age,” by H. L. Ginsberg, *BJPES* 14 (1947), 55–60 [Hebrew]; idem, “On a Certain Type of Interrogative Sentence in Biblical Hebrew,” *World Congress of Jewish Studies Summer 1947* (Jerusalem, 1952), 1.109–12 [Hebrew]; Y. Avishur, “The Pattern מדרע.מ.ה.א.מ. in the Book of Jeremiah,” *Beit Mikra* 16 (1971), 152–70 [Hebrew]; idem, “Double and Triple Question Patterns in the Bible and Ugaritic,” in B. Z. Luria, ed., *Zer LiGevurot: The Zalman Shazar Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1973), 421–64 [Hebrew].

44. See n. 10 above.

45. Contra Moshavi, “הלא,” 173, n. 6.

a definitive pragmatic description, but rather to comment on some of the proposals that have been made thus far.

As noted above, most scholars who discuss the clausal adverb אֵלֶּיךָ believe that the particle is asseverative, meaning something like “indeed” or “surely.” Asseverative adverbs belong to the semantic system of epistemic modality, which indicates the speaker’s strength of commitment to what he is saying.⁴⁶ Some modal expressions express doubt (e.g., the verb *may* and adverbs such as *perhaps* and *possibly*) while others express certainty (e.g., the verb *must* and adverbs such as *indeed*, *certainly*, and *definitely*). In order to assess the asseverative interpretation of אֵלֶּיךָ, it is worthwhile examining the characteristic pragmatic functions of certainty adverbs and similar expressions. In English, the modal verb *must* used epistemically (i.e., referring to certainty rather than obligation) has the paradoxical effect of pragmatically weakening the assertion, implying that the assertion is the product of inference, rather than direct observation or knowledge. Thus the modal assertion *It must be raining* is epistemically weaker than the simple assertion *It is raining*.⁴⁷ The latter assertion implies that the speaker knows for a fact that it is raining, while the former implies that he has merely deduced this information from circumstantial evidence (“What else could explain the mud on the floor?”).

English certainty adverbs are used somewhat differently, not carrying the implication that the assertion is only an inference. Thus one can argue that *It is certainly raining* is a pragmatically stronger assertion than *It is raining*.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, on a deeper level, the use of a certainty adverb reflects a perception on the part of the speaker that the assertion needs strengthening, typically because it is likely to encounter doubt or skepticism on the part of the addressee. Thus certainty adverbs are frequently used in assertions that cannot be objectively verified at the time of speech, such as subjective assessments (e.g., *This is certainly the most remarkable book to have been written in the last decade*) and predictions and promises regarding the future (e.g., *I will definitely be home by 10:00 P.M.*) They are used in response to a challenge by the addressee regarding the veracity of an assertion, as in the following interchange: A: *John is at home now.* B: *I don’t think so.* A: *Oh, he certainly is.*⁴⁹ They can be used to confirm a suspicion or accusation: *The house had indeed been left unlocked on the night of the robbery.* Yet another use is in concessive structures: *It is certainly a good film, but I can’t bring myself to watch it.*

BH certainty adverbs such as אֵלֶּיךָ, אֵלֶּיךָ, אֵלֶּיךָ, and אֵלֶּיךָ appear to be pragmatically similar to their English counterparts; biblical parallels can be drawn for many of the uses mentioned above. For example, אֵלֶּיךָ indicates that the assertion is a logical inference in Exod. 2:13. אֵלֶּיךָ occurs in a prediction in 1 Kgs. 11:2. אֵלֶּיךָ is used in Gen. 20:2 in response to a challenge to the veracity of the speaker’s previous assertion. In

46. J. Lyons, *Semantics* (Cambridge, 1977), 2.793.

47. Lyons, *Semantics*, 2.808–9. The same effect has been observed for adverbs such as בְּוודָאִי (ב) ‘certainly’ in modern Hebrew; see M. Z. Kaddari, “Syntactic Behavior of Wad’ay (Bewad’ay) (A Contrastive Analysis of Mod(ern) H(ebrew) and M(ishnaic) H(ebrew)),” *Balshanut Ivrit Hapashit* 11 (1977), 47–59 [Hebrew]; G. B. Zarfati, “Pragmatics and Speech Acts,” *Leshonenu La’am* 34 (1983), 110–11 [Hebrew]; Z. Livnat, “Epistemic Modality as Materialized in Modern Hebrew,” in S. Sharvit, ed., *Studies in Ancient and Modern Hebrew in Honour of M. Z. Kaddari* (Ramat Gan, 1999), 350–51 [Hebrew].

48. F. R. Palmer, *Mood and Modality* (Cambridge, 1986), 20.

49. Example from Palmer, *Mood and Modality*, 87.

Josh. 7:20 *מִן־נָפֶל* is used to confirm an accusation. The concessive use of *מִן־נָפֶל* is found in 2 Kgs. 19:17 and Ruth 3:12.

Let us now consider the proposal that *אֵלֶּה* is a certainty adverb. The asseverative interpretation is possible in predictions, such as (17) and (18) above. It is also plausible in justifications, such as (25) and (26) above. By adding a certainty adverb that stresses his commitment to the premise of an argument, the speaker rhetorically strengthens the conclusion of the argument, e.g., *Take your umbrella – surely you don't want to catch cold!*

In other discourse contexts in which the clausal adverb *אֵלֶּה* occurs, however, the asseverative interpretation would appear to have anomalous pragmatic effects. Consider *אֵלֶּה* in announcements, as in 1 Sam. 20:37 *הֲלֹא הִיא מֵאַחַד הַיְּדֵיךָ* (see [12] above). If *אֵלֶּה* is a certainty adverb, Jonathan's statement either sounds like an inference (“The arrow must be beyond you”), or a defensive statement expecting opposition (“Really, the arrow is beyond you”). Either reading seems inappropriate in context. The use of a certainty adverb in answers, such as *בְּתִשְׁבֵּעַ הֲלֹא־זֹאת* (2 Sam. 11:3, [19] above), would also be anomalous unless the speaker were trying to hedge his answer (“That must be Bathsheba”) or is anticipating skepticism (“That is certainly Bathsheba”). There is no reason for him to do either of these things.

Finally, *אֵלֶּה* in third-person narrative can hardly be understood as asseverative, considering the fact that indisputably asseverative adverbs, such as *אֲמֵן*, *אֵינֶנּוּ*, *אֵינֶנּוּ*, and *מִן־נָפֶל*, occur only in dialogue or second person monologue and never in third-person narrative.⁵⁰ The inappropriateness of the asseverative interpretation of *אֵלֶּה* in these various discourse contexts casts doubt on the relevance of this interpretation even for the aforementioned contexts in which it is apparently compatible.

Several scholars have asserted that the clausal adverb *אֵלֶּה* is restricted to presenting information already known to the addressee.⁵¹ This characterization fits most instances of justificational *אֵלֶּה*, but does not apply to the use of *אֵלֶּה* in announcements, realizations, predictions and answers, all of which typically involve new information.⁵² It should also be noted that even in many justificational *אֵלֶּה* clauses there is often no compelling reason to assume that the information is known to the addressee.⁵³

50. Another asseverative particle, *אֲבָל*, developed in the late biblical period into a contrastive particle that can be used in third-person narrative, as in 2 Chr. 1:4.

51. See Steiner (Review, 149), as well as *BDB*, 520, which writes that non-interrogative *אֵלֶּה* declares “with some rhetorical emphasis what is, or might be, well known.” A. Van Selms (“Halō in the Courtier's Language in Ancient Israel,” *Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies* [Jerusalem, 1967], 1.hb137–40), who considers all occurrences of *אֵלֶּה* to be interrogative, supports the position that *אֵלֶּה* marks known information; see n. 52 below. A similar claim has been made with regard to the clausal adverb *וְהִלֵּא* in Mishnaic Hebrew (U. Mor, “הר"י אהר"ן דן: Two Presentative Particles in Mishnaic Hebrew according to Ms. Ebr. 32.2 to Sifré on Numbers,” *Leshonenu* 68 [2006], 227 [Hebrew]), as well as *וְהִלֵּא* in Modern Hebrew (Ariel, “Discourse Markers,” 234).

52. Van Selms (“Halō”) argues that in such cases the speaker has phrased his answer or his announcement as if it were known information for reasons of politeness (e.g., so as not to offend a king, who is supposed to be omniscient). This explanation seems farfetched and is not applicable to all instances of the clausal adverb, e.g., Jonathan's speech to his servant in 1 Sam. 20:37 ([12] above). A similar explanation is offered by Brongers (“Some Remarks,” 178). His rendering of *אֵלֶּה* in such passages as Josh. 10:13 as “as you know” is surprising, considering the fact that these texts are otherwise exclusively third-person narratives.

53. See, e.g., Gen. 4:6–7, 37:13, 44:4–5; Judg. 4:14, 15:2; 1 Sam. 1:8; 2 Kgs. 6:32.

The frequent association between justificational אֵלֶּה and known information can be explained as stemming not from a restriction on the use of the particle, but from a natural tendency to justify a claim on the basis of information already accepted by the addressee. Most instances of justificational הִנֵּה involve known information as well, although this particle is certainly not restricted to known information.

A different interpretation of אֵלֶּה is offered by Blau, who views the clausal adverb as a presentative, grouping it with הִנֵּה and הִן “behold.”⁵⁴ As shown above, a parallel between clausal adverb אֵלֶּה and הִנֵּה is attested in a broad variety of discourse contexts, including announcements, predictions, third-person narrative, and justifications. Although הִנֵּה is not found in the answers to questions, there is no apparent reason that a presentative could not be appropriately used in that context. The best pragmatic characterization of אֵלֶּה, therefore, appears to be a presentative particle. A matter for further research is the identification of the features shared by the various contexts in which both אֵלֶּה and הִנֵּה occur, and the identification of the kinds of contexts in which one or the other particles does not appear.

5. Conclusion

It has been shown that אֵלֶּה is non-interrogative when it occurs in a number of discourse contexts, including announcements, realizations, predictions, answers to questions, and third-person narrative. Justificational אֵלֶּה is frequently non-interrogative as well. The non-interrogative interpretation of אֵלֶּה in these contexts can generally be established on pragmatic and/or syntactic grounds. The clausal adverb אֵלֶּה is minimally characterized as a presentative particle the uses of which bears a striking resemblance to those of הִנֵּה.

54. Blau, *Grammar*, 105–6.